

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PARIS 23495 01 OF 02 121450Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----122824 121452Z /53

R 121439Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7052
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 23495

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM US FR GW UK
SUBJECT: QUADRILATERAL EXPERTS GROUP ON ARMS TRANSFERS

REF: (A) STATE 183131; (B) STATE 186669;
(C) PARIS 23287; (D) PARIS 23286

1. SUMMARY: SOONER THAN EXPECTED, THE QUAI HAS GIVEN US A RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL FOR WRITTEN EXCHANGES PRIOR TO THE US-SOVIET WORKING GROUP MEETING ON ARMS TRANSFERS RESTRAINT. IT IS NEGATIVE. THE REASONS CITED RANGE FROM FEAR OF HARDENING BUREAUCRATIC POSITIONS WITHIN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO THE FRENCH ELECTORAL SITUATION. AN IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL REASON IS THE FRENCH DESIRE TO HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE EXCHANGE WITH US ON ARMS CONTROL AND STRATEGIC MATTERS FOLLOWING THE BARRE VISIT IN MID-SEPTEMBER. WE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE FRENCH RESPONSE AND REEMPHASIZED US VIEWS IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFERENCED INSTRUCTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON AUGUST 11, QUAI POLITICAL DIRECTOR DE LABOULAYE RESPONDED TO OUR AUGUST 9 DEMARCHE (REFTELS A AND C).

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SECRET

PAGE 02 PARIS 23495 01 OF 02 121450Z

HE TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD DECIDED TO MOVE MORE QUICKLY THAN ANTICIPATED DUE TO GUIRINGAUD'S DEPARTURE FOR AFRICA. DESPITE THE SHORT TIME INVOLVED, HOWEVER, THE MATTER HAD BEEN CAREFULLY REVIEWED -- AND NOT JUST WITHIN THE QUAI D'ORSAY. THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES HAD DECIDED THAT THEY COULD NOT, FOR THE PRESENT, GO BEYOND

THE COMMENTS MADE BY PAGNIEZ AT THE JUNE 22 BONN MEETING. LABOULAYE THOUGHT THAT WE NEVERTHELESS HAD A PRETTY CLEAR READING OF FRENCH POLICY ON ARMS TRANSFERS.

3. LABOULAYE SAID THAT THE INCREASED DOMESTIC SENSITIVITY OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES AS THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN HEATS UP WAS ONE SIGNIFICANT FACTOR. SECONDLY, THE QUAI WAS CONVINCED THAT THE INTERMINISTERIAL COORDINATION NECESSARY TO RESPOND IN WRITING EITHER TO THE US PROPOSED GUIDELINES OR TO THE QUESTION ON DECISION-MAKING WOULD CAUSE MAJOR INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN PARIS. THERE WAS A RISK OF FORMALIZING FRANCO-AMERICAN DIFFERENCES AND HARDENING POSITIONS IN AN UNDESIRABLE MANNER.

4. LABOULAYE ALSO REPEATED WELL-KNOWN FRENCH VIEWS ABOUT THE NECESSITY TO HAVE THE SOVIETS IN ANY RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENT IN ORDER TO MAKE IT WORK. HE ALSO SAID THAT, IN THE FRENCH VIEW, A WORLD-WIDE ARMS RESTRAINT POLICY IS NOT POSSIBLE. FRANCE THINKS THAT ARMS RESTRAINT CAN BE VIABLE ONLY WHEN APPLIED TO A LIMITED GEOGRAPHIC AREA WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES CONCERNED. IN ANY CASE, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM US

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PAGE 03 PARIS 23495 01 OF 02 121450Z

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PAGE 01 PARIS 23495 02 OF 02 121456Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 23495

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AFTER THE US-SOVIET MEETING IN ORDER TO SEE HOW FRANCE'S POSITION MIGHT FIT IN WITH US THINKING AT THAT TIME.

5. LABOULAYE THEN REVERTED TO A GENERAL LINE OF ARGUMENT EXPRESSED BY GUIRINGAUD TO THE AMBASSADOR ON AUGUST 8 (REFTEL D); I.E. THAT PENDING ARMS CONTROL AND STRATEGIC MATTERS CANNOT BE VIEWED CASE BY CASE BUT MUST BE SEEN TOGETHER IN CONTEXT. SUCH QUESTIONS AS CTB, SALT, MBFR, AND EVEN THE INDIAN OCEAN MATTER HAD COMMON ELEMENTS INTELLECTUALLY. AND THEY ALL IMPINGED DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY ON THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE. THUS, AS GUIRINGAUD HAD MADE CLEAR TO AMBASSADOR HARTMAN, FRANCE ATTACHED CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO A DETAILED BILATERAL DIALOGUE ONCE BARRE'S VISIT HAD SET THE STAGE.

6. POLITICAL COUNSELOR EXPRESSED REGRET THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT COULD NOT GO ALONG WITH THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE OF PAPERS. DRAWING ON REFTELS A AND B, HE RECALLED THE BASIC POINTS OF OUR POSITION INCLUDING OUR IMPRESSION THAT GISCARD D'ESTAING IS WILLING TO SEE FRANCE COOPERATE IN EXPLORING OUR COMMON CONCERNS. (LABOULAYE SAID THAT GISCARD REMAINS SECRET

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PAGE 02 PARIS 23495 02 OF 02 121456Z

SYMPATHETIC BUT FACES REAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS.) APART FROM THE QUESTION OF A MORE GENERAL DIALOGUE WE SUGGESTED THAT CONVENTIONAL ARMS RESTRAINT IS AN ESPECIALLY URGENT MATTER IN VIEW OF PRESSURES IN MANY THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. WE POINTED OUT THAT, WHILE THE PROBLEM CAN ONLY BE SOLVED IN THE LONG TERM, WE FACE THE IMMEDIATE QUESTION OF OTHER SUPPLIERS FILLING GAPS LEFT BY OUR OWN RESTRAINT IN VARIOUS INSTANCES.

7. LABOULAYE REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTANDS OUR POSITION AND THE RATIONALE FOR IT. THERE IS A SIZEABLE JOB TO BE DONE, HOWEVER, IN CONVINCING A NUMBER OF KEY ELEMENTS IN FRANCE THAT THE ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION ARE NOT PART OF SOME MASTER PLAN AIMED AT SERVING DIRECT AMERICAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS. HARTMAN

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